



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This document addresses the following questions:

1. What is a planned special event?
2. What opportunities exist to plan and coordinate in advance of a planned special event?
3. Are there different categories of planned special events?
4. What factors influence the severity of impact a planned special event has on transportation operations?
5. What challenges do planned special events create for transportation agencies?
6. What is managing *travel* for planned special events?
7. What does managing travel for planned special events involve?
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10. What opportunities exist to improve travel management for all planned special events in a region?
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1. What is a planned special event?

A planned special event is a public activity with a scheduled time, location and duration that may impact the normal operation of the surface transportation system due to increased travel demand and/or reduced capacity attributed to event staging.

Planned special events include sporting events, concerts, festivals, and conventions occurring at permanent multi-use venues (e.g., arenas, stadiums, racetracks, fairgrounds, amphitheaters, convention centers). They also include less frequent public events such as parades, fireworks displays, bicycle races, sporting games, motorcycle rallies, seasonal festivals, and milestone celebrations at temporary venues.

The term *planned* special event is used to describe these activities because of their known locations, scheduled times of occurrence, and associated operating characteristics. Emergencies, such as a severe weather event or other major catastrophe, represent special events that can induce extreme traffic demand under an evacuation condition. However, these events occur at random and with little or no advance warning, thus contrasting characteristics of planned special events.

2. What opportunities exist to plan and coordinate in advance of a planned special event?

It is the foreknowledge of a planned special event that can be exploited by an agency to mitigate the effects of the additional traffic generated. Specific measures can be applied that would not be possible in a conventional incident. Temporary roadway and/or transit capacity improvements can be implemented in addition to other strategies to influence the utility of alternative travel choices. For instance, intense traveler information campaigns can change travel patterns to reduce volumes at the venue site.

Keys to successfully managing travel for planned special events include:

- Achieve early, constant input and participation of involved agencies.
- Predict event-generated travel impacts on both a local and regional level.
- Develop an integrated transportation management plan that can accommodate a range of traffic demands and other contingencies.
- Ensure successful traffic management plan implementation.
- Deploy a well-organized traffic management team equipped with the ability to communicate seamlessly between agencies.

- Conduct continuous traffic monitoring on the day-of-event and maintain protocol for modifying the traffic management plan to accommodate real-time traffic conditions.
- Transfer event management successes into daily applications, and translate lessons learned into future event planning and operations needs.

3. Are there different categories of planned special events?

The operational characteristics of planned special events create the following five event categories:

- *Discrete/recurring event at a permanent venue* (e.g., sporting and concert events), characterized by specific starting and predictable ending times, known venue capacity, advance ticket sales, and weekday event occurrences.
- *Continuous event* (e.g., fairs and festivals), characterized by occurrence often over multiple days, arrival and departure of event patrons throughout the event day, typically little or no advance ticket sales, capacity of venue not always known, and occurrence sometimes at temporary venues.
- *Street use event* (e.g., parades and street races), characterized by occurrence on a roadway requiring temporary closure, specific starting and predictable ending times, capacity of spectator viewing area not known, spectators not charged or ticketed, and dedicated parking facilities not available.
- *Regional/multi-venue event*, characterized by the occurrence of events at multiple venues and at or near the same time.
- *Rural event*, characterized by rural or rural/tourist area, high attendance events attracting event patrons from a regional area, limited roadway capacity serving an event venue, area lacking regular transit service, and events having either a time specific duration or continuous duration.

4. What factors influence the severity of impact a planned special event has on transportation operations?

Planned special events can significantly impact travel safety, mobility, and travel time reliability. The scope of these impacts represents a function of several event operation characteristics, including attendance, rate of event patron arrival and departure, venue location, and adjacent roadway capacity. The effect and perceived magnitude of mobility and travel time reliability impacts vary by class of transportation system user.

The impact of a planned special event on traffic and transit operations depends on a combination of several dynamic factors. Key considerations include:

- *Travel demand* refers to the expected number of event patrons and their arrival and departure rates. Modal split has a significant influence on the level of event impact, particularly on traffic operations.
- *Road/site capacity* concerns the available venue access and parking background capacity in addition to the capacity of roadways and transit serving the event venue. Capacity influences travel demand to a limited extent, as “seasoned” event patrons in some locales may choose to

use transit to access an event venue, because of severe traffic congestion experienced in the past, although they may not represent regular transit users.

- *Event operation* essentially defines the scope of travel demand, including market area, and may reduce available background capacity because of event staging requirements.
- *Available resources* refer to the quantity of personnel and equipment available to plan for and conduct day-of-event travel management operations.
- *External factors* include concurrent roadway construction activities on roadway corridors serving a venue and prevailing weather conditions on the day-of-event.

5. What challenges do planned special events create for transportation agencies?

Planned special events pose a unique and diverse set of challenges to stakeholders charged with maintaining transportation system safety, mobility, and reliability. These challenges include:

- Managing intense travel demand
- Mitigating potential capacity constraints
- Influencing the utility associated with various travel choices
- Accommodating the potential for heavy pedestrian flow and transit vehicles
- Coordinating travel management activities with the event operator and overall planning team
- Available staff resources and support services

6. What is managing *travel* for planned special events?

Managing travel for planned special events emphasizes a program approach specific to planned special events. This approach revolves around distinct, chronological phases relative to advance planning, management, and evaluation activities. Individual phases include interconnected strategies to assist stakeholders in identifying needs and resulting operations and coordination strategies tailored to the characteristics of a specific planned special event:

- Operations strategies include proactive control and management tactics, coupled with innovative technology applications, that effect changes in traffic and transit operations to improve safety and reduce delay in addition to reducing field personnel and equipment requirements.
- Coordination strategies include policies and initiatives aimed at communicating advisory information and travel options to event patrons and non-attendee road users to reduce peak traffic demand levels on corridors serving an event venue, thus improving system travel mobility and reliability.

Collectively, these strategies meet the challenge of managing travel for planned special events for a specific planned special event. Stakeholders must predict travel demand and efficiently utilize the excess capacity of the roadway system, parking facilities, and transit. They must also reach out to all road users, communicate travel information, and offer attractive incentives to influence traveler behavior and decision-making.

Integration of phases, from post-event evaluation to advance planning for future planned special events, creates a seamless process allowing for continuous improvement of transportation system

performance from one planned special event to the next. This iterative process, where stakeholders apply successes and lessons learned from a particular special event to future events, meets the challenge of managing travel for all planned special events in a region.

7. What does managing travel for planned special events involve?

Managing travel for planned special events involves advanced operations planning, stakeholder coordination and partnerships, developing a multi-agency transportation management plan, raising awareness of general public and event patrons of potential travel impacts, and coordinating agency services and resource sharing.

8. What are the goals of managing travel for planned special events?

The goals of managing travel for planned special events are:

- Achieving *predictability*
- Ensuring *safety*
- Maximizing *efficiency*
- Meeting public & event patron *expectations*

9. What are the benefits of managing travel for planned special events?

The proactive management of travel for planned special events yields numerous benefits to stakeholders and transportation system operations, including:

- Reduce traffic congestion
- Improve mobility
- Improve travel safety
- Form partnerships and build trust
- Promote interagency coordination, resource utilization and sharing
- Incorporate new procedures, plans, and practices into day-to-day operation of agencies

10. What opportunities exist to improve travel management for all planned special events in a region?

This level of advance planning, referred to as regional planning and coordination, involves the participation and coordination of stakeholders having an oversight role in addition to agencies directly responsible for event-specific planning. Products of regional planning and coordination include establishing new institutional frameworks, policies, and legislation to monitor, regulate, and evaluate future planned special events.

Key considerations toward facilitating regional planning and coordination for all planned special events in a region include:

- Mechanism for agencies to coordinate activities and work together

- Focus on continuously improving travel management for all planned special events in a region
- Establish formal, multi-agency program or initiative
- Champion and provide resources to pursue activities to improve on current practices
- Develop multi-year program plan prioritizing initiatives to improve current practices

11. Who are the stakeholders that may be involved with managing travel for planned special events?

Advance planning and day-of-event management of travel for planned special events involves stakeholders comprising three distinct groups. The *oversight team* involves stakeholders that deal primarily with program planning activities. These stakeholders include mid-to-upper level representatives of transportation agencies and law enforcement. Additional oversight stakeholders include elected officials, regional organizations, and other government agencies. The *event planning team* involves stakeholders participating in event-specific operations planning and implementation tasks. Stakeholders comprising the oversight team typically have mid-level representatives serving on the event planning team. Other stakeholders include the event organizer, media, emergency service agencies, private industry, and the public. The *traffic management team* involves stakeholders responsible for managing travel on the day-of-event. These groups include operations managers and field personnel representing transportation agencies, law enforcement, the event organizer, media, and private industry.

12. Why should public safety agencies be concerned with planned special event traffic management and control?

Public safety agencies (e.g., fire and emergency medical service) ensure adequate provision of emergency access routes to and from the event venue. These stakeholders, in addition to law enforcement and an emergency management agency, also work as part of the overall event planning team to ensure adequate pedestrian access routes and evacuation destination areas exist to meet emergency management plan requirements.

13. What are the key phases associated with managing travel for planned special events?

The practice of managing travel for planned special events incorporates advance planning, management, and evaluation activities encompassing five distinct, chronological phases:

- *Regional planning and coordination* facilitates more efficient and effective planning, coordination, operation, and evaluation of specific, future planned special events.
- *Event operations planning* involves advance planning and resource coordination activities conducted for a specific planned special event.
- *Implementation activities* concern strategizing traffic management plan deployment in addition to conducting necessary equipment testing and personnel training activities.
- *Day-of-event activities* refer to the daily implementation of the traffic management plan in addition to traffic monitoring.

- *Post-event activities* cover the evaluation of local and regional transportation operations based on stakeholder debriefings and an analysis of traffic data collected during the day-of-event.

14. What key initiatives and activities within the regional planning and coordination phase?

The potential focus of regional initiatives and activities include:

- Interagency agreements
- Regional or consistent agency permit process
- Recommended travel management practices for specific categories of planned special events
- Technical teams formed to champion and carryout specific initiatives
- Assess and report on benefits of regional and event-specific activities

15. What is the purpose of and key activities within the event operations planning phase?

Event operations planning concerns:

- Establishing a planning framework and team
- Predicting transportation system operations deficiencies and develop strategies to mitigate
- Assessing and planning for unexpected, high-impact scenarios
- Increasing traffic management team preparedness and productivity

Key activities and products include:

- Agency permitting of planned special events
- Interagency agreements
- Traffic management team
- Event travel management feasibility study
- Traffic management plan, transit management plan, emergency management plan, etc.
- Travel demand management initiatives

16. What is the purpose of and key activities within the implementation activities phase?

Implementation activities concern:

- Improving efficiency of traffic management plan deployment
- Identifying unknown and potential problems before the event
- Increasing traffic management team preparedness

Key activities and products include:

- Implementation plan:
 - Defines personnel assignments, roles and responsibilities of traffic management team personnel on the day-of-event
 - Describes a scenario-based, operations game plan at the management-level
 - Communicates instructions and protocol for media and public
 - Organizes traffic management personnel and resources at the field-level
- Training and preparation
- Personnel recruitment and training

17. What is the purpose of and key activities within the day-of-event activities phase?

Day-of-event activities concern:

- Facilitating rapid deployment of traffic management plan strategies and contingency plans
- Providing traffic and incident management support
- Responding to new scenarios and unexpected events

Key activities and products include:

- Traffic management team coordination and management
- Traffic management plan evaluation and revision
- Interagency communication structure and protocol
- Media interaction
- Traffic monitoring

18. What is the purpose of and key activities within the post-event activities phase?

Post-event activities concern:

- Evaluating transportation system operations, based on:
 - Stakeholder debriefings
 - Analysis of day-of-event traffic data
- Improving advance planning and operations for:
 - Future recurring events
 - Future events at the same venue
 - All future events in a region

Key activities and products include:

- Participant evaluation
 - Stakeholder debriefing
 - Patron survey
 - Public survey
- Post-event debriefing
- Post-event report

- Identification of key successes and lessons learned

19. How can stakeholders improve regional, multi-jurisdiction planning and management?

Regional planning and coordination for planned special events concerns proactively improving travel management for all planned special events in a region. Some key considerations include:

- Role of stakeholders representing multiple jurisdictions, including (1) how their involvement is coordinated, (2) what are the programs and initiatives that facilitate the planning and operation of planned special events, and (3) how special events planning is integrated with other ongoing transportation programs.
- Support necessary from a policy perspective. On a policy level, interagency agreements permit those involved to work together. At times, legislation may be needed to allow agencies to go beyond their current activities into areas not currently permitted legally.
- Regional planned special events programs. These programs put in place the framework for handling planned special events that occur across a region. This framework would include the template for groups created to deal with specific special events, identification of funding to support such planning, and the identification of infrastructure improvement needs in the region to better manage special events.

20. How can stakeholders improve local, single-jurisdiction event planning and management?

The development of a formal planned special event permit program marks a key program planning initiative for local jurisdictions to facilitate stakeholder coordination, compliance with community needs and requirements, and efficient event operations planning. Backed by guidelines and regulations specified in municipal ordinances, the program outlines a defined planning framework and schedule for event organizers and participating review agencies to follow. It represents an agreement between participating public agencies (e.g., transportation, law enforcement, public safety, etc.) to ensure, through planning activities or review, that all planned special events meet a set of mutually agreed upon requirements for day-of-event travel management. The program also defines the components of a permit application and associated permit approval requirements including recovery of public stakeholder expenses.

21. What is a planned special event *Traffic Management Plan*?

A planned special event traffic management plan indicates how traffic, parking, and pedestrian operations will be managed on the day-of-event. The plan contains strategies and tactics for mitigating travel impacts identified in a planned special event feasibility study analysis. A comprehensive plan consists of a site access and parking plan, pedestrian access plan, traffic flow plan, traffic control plan, en-route traveler information plan, traffic surveillance plan, and traffic incident management and safety plan. It should accommodate special considerations that may arise in conjunction with the needs of the various groups that either attend or have a direct interest in a planned special event. Such groups include event participants, spectators, event sponsors, dignitaries, media, street vendors, and non-ticketed visitors. In addition, the plan

should consider contingency plans to help mitigate a potential systemic breakdown of the transportation system during an unexpected event occurring at or near the same time as the planned special event.

22. What is the purpose of developing a Traffic Management Plan?

A traffic management plan indicates *how* traffic, parking, and pedestrian operations will be managed on the day-of-event. It accommodates planned travel demand management initiatives aimed at improving transportation system operations on the day-of-event. A proactive traffic management plan for planned special events prohibits individual transportation system components from impeding one another. It represents a flexible plan that can adapt to and optimize proposed transit service changes and travel demand management initiatives. A successful plan satisfies both the: (1) customer requirements of all transportation system users and (2) allotted budget for personnel and equipment resources assigned to the day-of-event operation.

23. What is the role of the traffic management team in event-specific planning and operations?

A traffic management team includes operations managers and field personnel representing transportation agencies, law enforcement, the event organizer, media, and private industry. The following denote typical team roles:

- Traffic management plan development and resource sharing
- Stakeholder coordination and team management
- Traffic management and control
- Staff event site command post
- Day-of-event traffic management
- Post-event evaluation activities

24. What are the typical responsibilities associated with managing travel for a specific event of the traffic management team?

A traffic management team includes operations managers and field personnel representing transportation agencies, law enforcement, the event organizer, media, and private industry. It functions to:

- Manage travel on the day-of-event.
- Determine the scope and amount of resources that will be used on the day-of-event.
- Identify resources in advance in case the traffic management team needs more resources than planned to implement the traffic management plan.
- Conduct traffic management plan evaluation and modification based on real-time traffic conditions.
- Perform traffic monitoring activities to support real-time traffic management and control decisions during the day-of-event in addition to post-event evaluation activities.
- Chronicle observed successes and lessons learned to assist in future event planning.

25. How do transit agencies support a traffic management team?

Modifications to existing transit service for a planned special event represent strategies to reduce traffic demand on the roadway network serving the event venue. The focus of a public transit agency is to increase ridership during the event by increasing the attractiveness of the service that it provides. In many locations and for many types of planned special events, additional ridership to and from special event sites can provide substantial additional revenue for the transit agency at little additional cost. Also, transit system use may relieve traffic congestion around the venue.

Transit agencies may develop a specialized transit plan detailing schedules and necessary equipment and personnel resources. The transit plan may specify one of more categories of transit operation on the day-of-event that include:

- Existing service plus additional vehicle hours (e.g., more frequent service or expanded hours of operation)
- Existing service plus route deviation (e.g., includes new stop at transit station(s) near venue)
- Express service (e.g., new route and schedule)
- Charter service (e.g., contract service)

26. What information exists on recommended practices specific to managing travel for planned special events?

The *Managing Travel for Planned Special Events Handbook* was written to assist responsible agencies in managing the ever-increasing number of planned special events impacting transportation system operations in rural, urban, and metropolitan areas. This handbook is available on the TMC Pooled-Fund Study web site at <http://tmcdfs.ops.fhwa.dot.gov> and the ITS Electronic Document Library (EDL) at <http://www.its.dot.gov> as publication no. FHWA-OP-04-010 or EDL Doc. #13883.

27. How is the *Managing Travel for Planned Special Events Handbook* organized?

This handbook consists of 15 chapters, the final five of which detail and contrast advance planning and operations activities for each of the five defined categories of planned special events. Chapter titles are as follows:

- Introduction
- Chapter 1 – Background
- Chapter 2 – Characteristics and Categories of Planned Special Events
- Chapter 3 – Overview
- Chapter 4 – Regional and Local Coordination
- Chapter 5 – Event Operations Planning
- Chapter 6 – Traffic Management Plan
- Chapter 7 – Travel Demand Management and Traveler Information
- Chapter 8 – Implementation Activities
- Chapter 9 – Day-of-Event Activities

- Chapter 10 – Post-Event Activities
- Chapter 11 – Discrete/Recurring Event at a Permanent Venue
- Chapter 12 – Continuous Event
- Chapter 13 – Street Use Event
- Chapter 14 – Regional/Multi-Venue Event
- Chapter 15 – Rural Event

Chapter 3 presents a high-level summary of managing travel for planned special events and identifies the key aspects of each step necessary to manage travel for a specific planned special event and all special events in a region. Chapters 4 through 10, which represent the core chapters of the handbook, encompass all five phases of managing travel for planned special events.

28. Does the handbook contain real-world examples and case studies?

Yes. The appendix contains multiple examples of venue maps, traffic control plans, sample permits, interagency agreements, website screen shots, and event information brochures. Throughout the handbook, there exist examples of interagency coordination, successful event management ideas, resource applications, and best practices.

29. What is the purpose of this handbook?

This handbook will lead practitioners step-by-step through all phases of managing travel for planned special events. It will:

- Bridge the gap between the state-of-the-practice and state-of-the-art.
- Provide a framework for establishing an integrated and stakeholder coordinated practice.
- Recommend proven and innovative techniques.
- Profile successful practices.

30. What is the target audience of this handbook?

Event operations stakeholders represent the target audience of this handbook. These stakeholders collectively work toward predicting, mitigating, and measuring the safety, mobility, and reliability impacts of a planned special event on transportation operations through comprehensive advance planning, day-of-event traffic management, and evaluation and monitoring activities. A traffic operations agency, law enforcement agency, and event organizer represent core stakeholders because of the responsibility they bear in developing and implementing a transportation management plan. Other key stakeholders include transit agencies and public safety agencies (e.g., fire and emergency medical service).

This handbook also recognizes a specific category of stakeholders, community interest stakeholders, who ensure and review advance planning and operations activities to manage event-generated travel for the purpose of minimizing impacts on community quality of life and maximizing potential social and economic benefits. Non-transportation agencies and elected officials play an important role in establishing policies, regulations, and initiatives for future

planned special events. This handbook presents numerous strategies and initiatives aimed at mitigating impacts to: (1) residents and businesses in the vicinity of the event site and (2) non-attendee transportation system users.

31. How can users navigate this handbook?

To assist the reader in navigating the handbook, each right-hand page has a vertical toolbar that indicates the following sections: (1) overview, (2) advance planning, (3) day-of-event activities, (4) post-event activities, and (5) event profile. At the top of the vertical toolbar, the associated chapter number, one through fifteen, is stated. Information is also presented in tables, flowcharts, and checklists so users can easily extract information and identify issues, analyses, and products applicable to a particular category of planned special event.

Certain stakeholders may find the majority of handbook chapters pertain to their duties and responsibilities when handling a planned special event. Other stakeholders may only have interest in information disseminated via a few handbook sections. This handbook recognizes three user groups, each of whom has an identifiable icon featured in the handbook. These user groups include: (1) transportation engineers, (2) law enforcement officers, and (3) event organizers. If a major chapter section contains topics suited to a particular user group, then the icon representing that group will appear on the same line as the section heading.

Each of the handbook chapters describing a particular step in the sequential process of planning and managing a planned special event represents a stand-alone chapter. Yet, the handbook provides a smooth transition from chapter to chapter and integrates the chapters through numerous references. Chapters designated under “event profile” provide a roadmap to help guide the user through all five phases of managing travel for planned special events, identifying issues, analysis, and products applicable to a specific planned special event category. To further guide readers, the event profile chapters specify references to data, special considerations, and best practices for a particular event category.

32. What additional resources and tools are available to assist practitioners involved locally in planning, resource allocation, and/or managing transportation operations for planned special events?

The following resources are also available to facilitate outreach and awareness and to encourage the utilization and integration of the concepts, methods, procedures, and techniques contained in the handbook into agency programs and policies for effective travel management for planned special events:

- Brochure; Publication No. FHWA-OP-04-033, EDL Doc. #13903
- Fact sheet; Publication No. FHWA-OP-04-034, EDL Doc. #13904
- Technical presentation – available on the TMC Pooled-Fund Study website

A national conference on Managing Travel for Planned Special Events is targeted for late 2004. One can periodically check <http://www.itsa.org/tsop.html> or http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/program_areas/sp-evnts-mgmt.htm for updates on this event.

National Highway Institute Course 133099, *Managing Travel for Planned Special Events*, is designed to support this handbook and will be available in 2005.

33. How can practitioners obtain assistance and further information?

For more information on the *Managing Travel for Planned Special Events Handbook* and associated products, visit the TMC Pooled-Fund Study website at <http://tmcpfs.ops.fhwa.dot.gov>, or call the FHWA Operations “Help Line” toll-free at (866) 367-7487.